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Title: Another Loveless Father: Grigory in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*

Abstract:

One of the major themes of *The Brothers Karamazov* is fathers and sons, whose bonds allow the author to explore the idea of active love. In the novel, positive father figures, such as Father Zosima, are presented alongside negative ones. Fyodor Karamazov is usually seen as the novel's prime example of a loveless father, but another father is also worthy of critical attention in this regard: Grigory, Fyodor Karamazov's loyal servant and Smerdyakov's foster father. As a father, Grigory seems as incapable of love as Fyodor Karamazov. In fact, when discussing the evil nature of Smerdyakov, Golstein has argued that Grigory is ultimately to blame because his "stubbornness, dogmatism, and constantly judgmental nature" (98) have led him to play a "destructive role in the shaping of Smerdyakov" (96). The text certainly provides ample evidence of Grigory's disastrous conduct as a parent. In the account of Smerdyakov's childhood, Grigory's verbal and physical abuse of his foster son is repeatedly mentioned. But while Grigory's negative role in Smerdyakov's existence is unquestionable, what remains to be examined is the reason for Grigory's hatred of him. Since Smerdyakov is a person nearly impossible to like, readers of the novel might well take Grigory's harsh treatment of his foster son for granted. Yet I would argue that understanding Grigory's motives requires more than judgments about his character. A more complete analysis of Grigory's relationship with Smerdyakov will help explain what drives Grigory to become an unloving father. To this end, I will look into the motives, both on conscious and subconscious levels, for Grigory's antagonism toward Smerdyakov.

Golstein, Vladimir. "Accidental Families and Surrogate Fathers: Richard, Grigory, and Smerdyakov." In *A New Word on The Brothers Karamazov*. Edited by Robert Louis Jackson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004.